

2020.01.21

**4 Deputy R.J. Ward of the Vice-Chair of the States Employment Board regarding the Joint Council Framework Agreement: (OQ.14/2020)**

Following his response to Oral Question 258/2019 that the board intended to “sit down with the unions and discuss the reviving of the joint council agreement, if it is appropriate to the negotiations”, will the vice-chair advise whether this meeting has happened and, if so, whether reviving the Joint Council Framework Agreement has been deemed appropriate, and if that is the case, by whom; and if not, why not?

**Connétable R.A. Buchanan of St. Ouen (Vice-Chair, States Employment Board):**

I thank the Deputy for his question. Under the direction of the States Employment Board a number of discussions have taken place with unions about the joint council framework and what should replace it. The officers met with the civil service unions on 16th January and a number of topics were discussed but primarily this one. Unions were advised that a meeting of all unions was to be set up to enable dialogue on this and on the next steps of other key priorities, such as the Government Plan and budgets. The invitation of this meeting is going out to all unions within the next week or so. It is intended at this joint meeting that we will also discuss what arrangements should be put in place to strengthen our working relationships with all of the unions following what has been a tough set of pay talks over the last couple of years. What is clear to S.E.B. (States Employment Board) is that there are many parts of the joint council framework that are good. Fundamentally however the council was set up when it was envisaged the workforce modernisation programme would decide with a single paying grading structure. In that situation a forum would have been needed to negotiate pay with all unions around a single table. But this has not happened. Within its text the framework states in appendix 5: “Public sector pay review will be carried out under the auspices of the joint council.” Unfortunately with the collapse of W.F.M. (workforce modernisation) this is no longer relevant. This is why the council has not met since June 2017 even under the previous S.E.B. So it is clear to us that new arrangements are needed. We will not be reinventing the wheel. We will be keeping what is good and what works and formalising this with an agreement that pay negotiations remain within single pay groups, as has historically been the case.

**2.4.1 Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Can I just confirm the date of the meeting that the Assistant Minister mentioned in his answer, for clarity?

**The Connétable of St. Ouen:**

I cannot give you an actual date because we are in the process of negotiating the diaries, as the Deputy will appreciate, with the number of parties. I anticipate it will be in the next 3 or 4 weeks. Certainly we are trying to get it done as quickly as we possibly can.

**2.4.2 Deputy G.P. Southern:**

The Minister mentioned improving relations with the public sector. Surely the essential step that he needs to take is to negotiate in good faith and not rely on imposition. Could the Minister state how much there is in the Government Plan allocated to pay rises for the public sector in the years to come?

**The Connétable of St. Ouen:**

I think taking the second part of that question first, I do not have the number to hand but I can obviously let the Deputy have it. As far as the good faith question is concerned, I think we always sat down in good faith with the unions and it is unfortunate that with one group we have not been able to reach agreement. But going forward, we are hoping to avoid that problem and we will always start negotiations in good faith and hope to conclude them in the same vein.

#### **2.4.3 Deputy R.J. Ward:**

It is clear from the answer that it was at some point deemed that the joint framework agreement was not appropriate so, can I ask, for the final part of my question, who decided that was not appropriate and when was that decision made?

#### **The Connétable of St. Ouen:**

I can only answer the question by saying that I will look through the records of the S.E.B. because it was a previous S.E.B. that organised the last meeting. If I am honest, it is probably a practice that deemed that it was no longer appropriate because in the last round of pay negotiations each pay group wanted to negotiate separately so the principal thrust of that agreement fell away. But I will try and find an answer to that particular question because it is not this current S.E.B. that decided that.